

What Will It Take for the World to Believe?

1 John 3:18–24

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Do you ever wonder about those who don't know Jesus? Their lifestyle is not the same as ours. They have thought patterns that don't match our thoughts. Their actions are different than ours.

I wonder at times what it will take for them to come to know Jesus. What will it take for them to be turned from their own attitudes to trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior?

I know the Holy Spirit is the one who turns people to Jesus. My grandfather used the word conviction. The Holy Spirit would convict people of their sin. In so doing they would confess their need for Jesus to cleanse them of their sin.

The Holy Spirit works through us to help people come to Jesus. People aren't willing to listen to us or the Holy Spirit until they see action.

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. 1 John 3:18–24 (NIV84)

Our testimony to the world and to God is to love with words and actions. If the world is going to follow Jesus they need to see action. Even though there are more people talking today than ever before, people want action. There are talk shows on every news network; there are podcasts, and people talking on Instagram, Facebook, Tik-Tok, and all other social media platforms are all talk, talk, talk.

Everybody is talking, talking, talking. But what everybody wants is action. That's been the reality since, forever. The saying "talk is cheap" has always been true. What are you going to do?

Action is how Christians got their name. They were first part of the "Way", because they were living and acting in a different way. Then people started to recognize that the way they were living was like Jesus, the Christ. So, they were called Christians, or "little Christ". Christians were acting like Jesus. Acting like Jesus was so unique that the world noticed the difference.

That is interesting, isn't it? Today, too many people in the world don't see Christians acting like Jesus. This has resulted in the world saying Christians are hypocrites; that Christians are judgmental; that Christians are no different than the rest of the world. Christian has taken on a different meaning to the world than it did when we were first called Christians.

Jesus was a person of faith and action. He announced God's Kingdom was coming. He brought God's Kingdom to life. He spoke and He took action. He taught along the lake front; He taught in individual homes; He taught in villages and cities; He taught in synagogues and even in the Temple. People were astonished and amazed at His teaching. They were motivated and inspired by His words.

They gathered by the thousands to listen to Him. Jesus backed up every word He said with action. When Jesus was in a home teaching, He healed a man. At a wedding He did a miraculous thing. While going from one place to the next - down the street or around the corner - He made blind people see, took away skin diseases, cast out demons, multiplied five loaves and two fish to feed thousands.

Every word that was spoken and written about Him by the prophets were action words. Jesus, the Christ, God's anointed Savior, was proclaimed as a person of action. Jesus didn't disappoint.

Jesus taught all of His followers to be servants, to do what He did, to love others. Jesus was an action hero. He commands us to be action heroes, but without having a hero attitude. Just take whatever action is needed at the moment.

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. 1 John 3:21-22 (NIV)

We carry a sense of guilt that keeps us from asking for what pleases God. We may lack the assurance of salvation. Is that what's keeping you from taking action? Is that what's keeping you from being like Jesus?

We still think we have to be perfect. We think that before we can take any action we have to be perfect. We look at our lives and recognize that we aren't perfect. We then work at being perfect instead of working for Jesus. Our lack of action, and our willingness to remain trapped by our sins, is a witness to the world. It's a negative witness.

The early Christians were known for being like Jesus. They accepted, welcomed their salvation, allowed Jesus to take away their sin, and lived like Jesus. The people saw their changed lifestyle and were impressed. The way Christians lived made a difference to those who knew them.

Is it possible that we are asking God, who has forgiven us, for the wrong things? In my own life it comes down to how I'm asking. I'm guilty of not asking Jesus for what He wants. There are so many times I hear myself asking Jesus for things that selfishly meet my needs. I want my desires fulfilled. I get so wrapped up in my thoughts that I fail to pray for others to be forgiven and redeemed.

Jesus mentioned that our two most important actions are to love God and to love our neighbors. So, I need to start praying for new ways to love God and new ways to love my neighbors.

We may still not trust Jesus to handle all the details. The reason I think I pray selfishly is because I know what I want. I also want God to want what I want. I've got an idea, and I want to be in control of my ideas, my plans. Do you see how that's a lack of confidence in His salvation?

I haven't surrender a part of my life to Jesus. Which translates into I am still holding onto a sin. This works around in my mind and my spirit. But, I would rather do it my way than to give it to Jesus. As a result I don't take any action and I don't pray for sinners to be saved. I am not alone, many of us are doing the same thing. It is our human nature that is still in control.

When I have confidence that Jesus has forgiven me, I'm not burdened by my desires. This is true for each one of us. Throughout our lives we waiver back and forth between trusting Jesus with the details. The details can be salvation, because the devil keeps tempting us. The details can be letting go of my desires and letting Jesus do the work.

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. 1 John 3:18–20 (NIV)

When we love with words and actions we have confidence everywhere we go. Since love is the driving motivation and inspiration we are no longer burdened about making mistakes. Imagine what you could do if your only motivation was loving others? The poor, hungry, and oppressed would be loved. When people are loved they are able to understand the love of God. The prisoners, the naked, and the fearful would be loved. When people are loved they are able to understand the love of God.

When you and I surrender to Jesus our human reactions to the poor, hungry and oppressed He takes over our thoughts and our actions. When we turn the love Jesus has for us on the prisoners, the naked, the fearful our hands start doing things we never imagined.

Imagine what you could do if your inspiration for loving others came from Jesus? I'm not perfect, but Jesus loves me. You're not perfect, but Jesus loves you. That is inspiring. That is life changing. There is no greater love than this, that one person will lay down their life for another. Jesus laid down His life for every person He loved. Jesus loves every person. Jesus loves the poor, hungry, and oppressed. Jesus loves prisoners, the naked, and the fearful. Jesus loves me and Jesus loves you.

Everyday we get pulled back to a sin. Everyday we are tempted and fail. Everyday Jesus forgives our sin, stands us up on our feet, and tells us to love one another. Everyday we are given a new dose of grace and power. That is the exact amount of grace and we need. It is enough to overcome the temptations. It is enough grace and power to love the poor, hungry, oppressed, the prisoners, the naked, and the fearful.

Now, I wouldn't be motivated if Jesus hadn't saved my soul from my own desires and sins. I wouldn't be inspired if Jesus hadn't delivered my soul from an eternity in hell. You and I can't find the motivation or the inspiration on our own. The temptations of selfishness, greed, fear quickly take over our thoughts, then our actions. Our hearts and our souls, our minds and our bodies are at peace with God because of Jesus.

Everyday we can rest in the truth that the grace and power of Jesus is more than enough for that day. We are filled with His grace and His power. We are filled with His love. They are more than sufficient for each one of us, and for every sinner. See yourself, motivated and inspired by Jesus, loving the people all along your path.

This is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. 1 John 3:23–24 (NIV)

Believe that Jesus is the Son of God and love as He loves you. Genuine love has the power to change hearts hardened by sin. Who knows that as the truth?

You know Jesus. You have been forgiven. You have been delivered from eternity in Hell. You are a changed, transformed person. Sin and temptation are no longer your master. Your nature as a human is no longer your nature. You are a child of God, a brother or sister of Jesus. You are a citizen of heaven. Your nature is that of Jesus, because He lives in you.

So, doubt and fear have been replaced by grace and power. Anger, selfishness, and pity have been replaced by love and action. You are a believer in the Way – Jesus Christ. You are a follower of the risen Lord – Jesus Christ. You are living as a Christian – a Little Jesus Christ. Your actions are motivated by His love. Your thoughts and words are inspired by His love. You have a life that is different than the world around you. You are known by others as a people who are distinctively loving.

Every person who doesn't love Jesus will spend eternity in Hell unless Christians like you and me take action. That's a lot of pressure, isn't it? Not really, because we are motivated and inspired by the love of Jesus.

We are motivated that we will be in heaven when we die. We are inspired to help others to be in heaven with us. Don't be overwhelmed. You are living right here and right now because God put you here. Your response to being in this fellowship of believers is to love God and love our neighbors. We are placed in this fellowship for a reason. We are here to support and encourage one another to love God and love our neighbors.

So, how are we going to love our neighbors? How will God's love flow through us to our world?

I didn't know that I was going to do this. But, the voice of God has been whispering something to my spirit. This has been happening for a while, but I was too busy doing my own thing to focus on what was being said.

Now, it's becoming more clear. We, as a fellowship of believers, need to take action. We need to take action motivated and inspired by the love Jesus has shared with each one of us.

Through out the month of May you will find in your weekly program a piece of paper. On that page write down what God is telling you. Put on the page the actions you believe God is whispering your to spirit. Let God reveal to you, ask Jesus to reveal to you, how we can love our community through specific, ongoing actions.

No one needs to spend eternity in Hell. The love of Jesus, His shed blood, His body broken on the cross, and His resurrected body have made it possible for everyone to be in heaven for eternity.

Jesus wants you to embrace the love He has for you. He has taken away your sins. He has opened the path to heaven for you. You need to believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead to save you. This decision is one conversation away.